



Improving Physical Activity for People with a Disability

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Research on children and adults with developmental disabilities shows a pattern of poor health promotion practices in this population. Investigators have noted that individuals living in community settings are more likely to experience obesity and less likely to engage in physical activity than individuals living in highly structured settings, such as institutions. Consequently, overweight/obesity, poor nutrition, and low physical fitness are secondary conditions that have a substantial negative impact on quality of life and must be targeted in future intervention research.

The challenges involved in increasing physical activity for people with physical or developmental disabilities include educating care providers about health promotion and preventive health strategies, promoting safe exercise guidelines, encouraging exercise facilities to be more accessible, and identifying universally designed exercise equipment that may be used by people with a broad range of strength and abilities. CDC is working to address these challenges by developing training models and by supporting state programs to reach people with disabilities.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- Supported the National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD) which serves as a national clearinghouse to gather, organize, and consolidate existing information and to synthesize resources on physical activity for people with disabilities; and facilitate dissemination to consumers, practitioners, and disability and service organizations. The NCPAD website <http://www.ncpad.org> offers a variety of academic and technical resources in a variety of formats to promote physical activity. For individualized inquiries, people may reach a specialist at 1-800-900-8086 (voice and TTY).
- Funded state health departments programs in Illinois, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, and Vermont to address physical activity for people with a disability.
- Collaborated with the Illinois Department of Public Health to develop the infrastructure for a statewide surveillance system tracking the health status of adults with developmental disabilities. The surveillance data will help guide future health promotion intervention research addressing the secondary conditions of overweight and obesity, poor physical fitness, and poor nutritional status in people with developmental disabilities.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Supporting NCPAD as it incorporates research on nutrition in conjunction with physical activity in promoting optimum health promotion for people with a disability.
- Evaluating state-based programs that promote physical activity for people with disabilities.
- Expanding best practice interventions that have been tested in local communities to promote physical activity among larger populations of people with disabilities.